

Providence College

From the Selected Works of Janice G. Schuster

July 24, 2017

Patrologia Latina (update of 2011 review)

Janice G. Schuster

ccAdvisor

ccadvisor.org

Patrologia Latina Database. ProQuest
<http://pld.chadwyck.com>

Schuster, Janice G.. Review of *Patrologia Latina Database*. Reviewed Sep. 06, 2017. *ccAdvisor*. DOI: 10.5260/CCA.199417.
<http://ccadvisor.org/review/10.5260/CCA.199417>.

Primary Category

Philosophy & Religion

Secondary Categories

History & Area Studies

Humanities

Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology

Abstract:

The Patrologia Latina database offers 221 volumes of works written by the Latin Fathers. It is the extraordinary achievement of the nineteenth-century scholar and priest, Jacques-Paul Migne. It covers the works of the Latin Fathers from Tertullian around AD 200 to the death of Pope Innocent III in AD 1216 and contains the most influential works of late ancient and early medieval theology, philosophy, history, and literature. This review looks at the user interface and content details in this unique database offered by ProQuest.

Overview:

The Patrologia Latina database is the extraordinary achievement of the nineteenth-century scholar and priest, Jacques-Paul Migne. It covers the works of the Latin Fathers from Tertullian around AD 200 to the death of Pope Innocent III in AD 1216. It contains the most influential works of late ancient and early medieval theology, philosophy, history, and literature.

The database includes volumes of works written by the Latin Fathers in a fully-searchable electronic format. It contains 221 volumes and represents a complete electronic version of the first edition of Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (1844-1855 and 1862-1865).

Migne's *Patrologia Latina* was originally printed in 217 volumes from 1844 to 1855. There were two series: the series prima, volumes 1-73, covering Tertullian to Gregory the Great, 1844 -1849; and the series secunda, volumes 74-217, covering Gregory the Great to Pope Innocent 3rd, 1849-1855.

Migne himself reprinted volumes up to 1865, at which time he sold the literary rights for the *Patrologia Latina* to the firm of Garnier in Paris. In February of 1868, a fire destroyed Migne's presses and his printing plates. Garnier had already begun reprinting parts of the *Patrologia Latina* three years earlier and proceeded to reprint the entire set by 1880. Unfortunately, these reprintings, and all subsequent editions by Garnier, are inferior in many respects to Migne's own first editions. Consequently, the *Patrologia Latina Database* has been based exclusively on the copies of the first edition of the texts and indices.

Migne originally intended the *Patrologia Latina* to span the whole history of Latin Christianity up to the eve of the Reformation. However, he eventually judged that it would be wiser to conclude the series with the year AD 1216 as, after that year, the explosion of philosophical and theological writing made it impossible for any series to include even representative portions of the principal texts.

The main chronological sequence of authors in the *Patrologia Latina*, therefore, runs from about AD 200 to AD 1216. However, Migne did incorporate medieval texts written after AD 1216 where these were traditionally attached to an earlier work, often as a commentary or an introduction to it.

The Patrologia Latina Database is the full-text electronic version of the Patrologia Latina, including all prefatory material, original texts, critical apparatus, indexes, and illustrations. The Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina (BHL) reference numbers have been included in the Patrologia Latina Database. All Latin text is fully searchable and Unicode functionality allows full display of diacritics and Greek keyword searching.

Customers who subscribe to both the Patrologia Latina and the Acta Sanctorum (<http://acta.chadwyck.com/>) databases are able to search across both databases at the same time, in a single search. The addition of BHL reference numbers to the Patrologia Latina database enables direct comparison of textual passages between the two resources.

The Patrologia database is invaluable for scholars in early European social history and the development of Christianity, from the foundation of the Church to the Reformation.

Free MARC records are available.

User Interface:

Search interface: The default search screen is clear and concise with five searching fields: keyword, Greek keyword (using Greek letters/alphabet); title, author (of the document), and volume. One oddity is that the software requirements link: <http://pld.chadwyck.com.providence.idm.oclc.org/helphtx/htxview?template=basic.htx&content=sysreq.htx>, indicates that "Patrologia Latina Database is optimized to operate with Netscape Version 6.0 or higher, or Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher. Use of one of these browsers is strongly recommended." The Netscape browser no longer exists, and it seems that Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer are currently the preferred browsers for most users. The database appeared to work fine using Chrome. I wonder why ProQuest hasn't updated the Software Requirements information.

The search interface is easy to navigate with options clearly indicated. For each field, the searcher can either enter a search term or click on browse for a list of possible terms. I did a keyword search for "Jerusalem." The results screen indicated clearly how to return to the search screen and included options to begin a new search or refine the existing search.

Searching: The initial search screen makes very clear which searching options are available. However, a searcher who is not familiar with the print 221-volume Patrologia Latina set will need to educate herself about what is actually being searched. For example, continuing with the "Jerusalem" keyword search, the results screen includes an author, "Pamelius, Jacobus," which is not hyperlinked, followed by the title of a text, "PARADOXA TERTULLIANI, CUM ANTIDOTO JACOBI PAMELII," which is hyperlinked, followed by a list of three hits, which are not hyperlinked. Since I am not familiar with the printed Patrologia set, I clicked on the linked text, "PARADOXA..." and realized that the database had searched for my term and found it three times in that text, and the list of hits on the previous screen were the contexts in which the database had found my term in the text. Clicking on the document title link from the results screen leads to the document itself, including a link at the top of the screen for "first hit." I clicked on that link and was taken to "Jerusalem" in the text, marked by a red dot and arrow. All three instances of "Jerusalem" in the document were on the same screen, all clearly marked by a red dot and arrow, so I could view all of them easily.

However, I wondered how the searcher would proceed to the next instance of the term if it did not appear on the same screen as the first hit. To test this, I searched for the term "Procopius," which resulted in several documents that included the term multiple times. I clicked on the link for one of the hits, then clicked on the link for First Hit. The system took me to the first hit marked with a red dot and arrow as it had when I had searched for "Jerusalem." It was not immediately obvious to me how to go to the next hit, which was not visible on the screen. I tried to click on the red dot, but it was not clickable. I then clicked on the arrow and discovered that it was there not to mark the hit next to it but instead to take the user to the *next* hit in the document. The subsequent hit had both forward and backward arrows as well as the red dot. It was then obvious to me that the arrows were navigation devices to go to the next or previous instance of the search term (hit) within the document.

Within some of the texts are icons that look like documents but with no indication as to what they denote. I clicked on one, which led to a comments page. Linking the comments to a separate page makes sense from a researcher's point of view, but the icon should be labeled. There are also icons that look like the document ones but with a pen added. I am not sure what the difference is between the two icons. It would make sense for the pen to indicate that the comments are savable and/or editable, but that does not appear to be the case.

The searching mechanism for the other search options is very good. When I browsed for a Greek keyword, it was obvious how to select the term and add it to the searching page.

Help Screens: The search screen includes options to include or exclude apparatus; limit to all authors, medieval authors, or modern authors; and to display search results with context or with summary of matches. I am not familiar with the term "apparatus," so I clicked on "help contents" on the left of the screen, then on "apparatus" under "full text," which explained that the document icon mentioned above denotes three types of notes: marginalia, editorial notes (inserted by Chadwyck-Healey) and variant readings.

The help feature would be more useful if it were searchable. I should have been able to search for the term "apparatus" instead of having to find it on the screen. There should be help in context: when a user clicks on help, it should go to the help section for the term closest to where one clicked. For example, if I am unsure about what "apparatus" means, I should be able to click on help when I'm on the screen that includes the term and immediately see an explanation.

Results Display: The navigation on the results display is clear: new search; refine search; and navigating to the next or previous page of results.

One oddity is the use of the word “hit” regardless of whether one or multiple hits are retrieved. My “Jerusalem” search resulted in “Found 3 hit.” It seems odd that the system can’t use the word “hits” when multiple records are retrieved.

Historic Content: The database includes the 221-volume collection known as the Latin series (Paris 1841-1864), which is half of Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*. The other half is the 167-volume *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrologia_Graeca (Paris 1857-1866) of patristic and medieval Greek works with their medieval Latin translations, which are not included in the *Patrologia Latina* database. The volumes comprise an indispensable collection of Christian texts, extending in *Patrologia Latina* to the end of the pontificate of Innocent III in AD 1216 and in *Patrologia Graeco-Latina* to the fifteenth century.

When it first became available on CD-ROM in the mid-1990s, the *Patrologia Latina* database represented a leap forward for scholarly researchers of primary source church documents as well as other areas such as church history.

Accessibility: Under the “more information” link on the left of the database’s homepage, there is a link for accessibility, which leads to a document listing the database’s features to make it more accessible to users with visual, motor or cognitive disabilities: <http://pld.chadwyck.com.providence.idm.oclc.org/helphtx/htxview?template=basic.htx&content=access.htx>. The database complies with Priority/Guideline 1 standards of the Web.

Accessibility Initiative’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag>. Some features also contribute to compliance with Priorities/Guidelines 2 and 3. I am not sure if the database complies with WCAG 2.0, published in 2008, or WCAG 1.0, published in 1999.

Critical Evaluation:

Faculty will find the *Patrologia Latina* database to be invaluable in their research due, first, to its breadth of coverage. It includes works from around AD 200 to the death of Pope Innocent III in 1216. It covers most major and minor Latin authors and contains the most influential works of late ancient and early medieval theology, philosophy, history, and literature. Second, the database is cross-searchable with the *Acta Sanctorum Database* and *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina (BHL)*. The addition of BHL reference numbers to the *Patrologia Latina* database enables direct comparison of textual passages between the two resources. The database features fully searchable Latin text plus Greek keyword searching and a full display of diacritics. Free MARC records are available.

Competitive Products:

There are no direct competitors to ProQuest’s *Patrologia Latina* database. The *Corpus Christianorum* project <http://www.corpuschristianorum.org/home.html> by Brepols Publishers <http://www.brepols.net/Pages/Home.aspx> includes *Patrologia*, as well as other resources. However, it appears that not all 221 volumes that comprise the ProQuest *Patrologia* database are included in the *Corpus Christianorum* project’s version.

Purchase Contract:

The licensing agreement seems standard. Interlibrary loan, covered in Exhibit A: Permitted Uses, 1. e). i. of the agreement, is allowed with reasonable restrictions, including the stipulation that the loan does not replace the recipient library’s own subscription to either the products or the underlying work. Electronic reserves and coursepacks, covered in Exhibit A, 1. c), are permitted using durable links instead of PDFs. That is standard industry practice since it allows a hit to be recorded for usage statistics. The inclusion of a clause allowing scholarly sharing (Exhibit A, 1. e). ii. is welcome in the age of Open Access. Data mining is permitted per Exhibit A, 6. d).

Pricing:

The *Patrologia Latina* database is available as an annual subscription and as a one-time purchase, which provides perpetual access with the payment of an annual “continuing service fee.” Pricing varies according to many factors, including the type of library, FTE or other population size, and other ProQuest database subscriptions or purchases. For a U.S.-based, Masters-level academic institution with an FTE between 5,000 and 15,000, for example, the annual subscription price would be between \$4,070 and \$5,579, and the one-time purchase price would be between \$25,142 and \$34,457. Consortium pricing is available.

The Open Greek and Latin Project provides a free XML version: <http://www.dh.uni-leipzig.de/wo/projects/open-greek-and-latin-project/>

Authentication:

The database is available on- and off-campus, by IP range and/or username and password.

References:

1. "Corpus Christianorum Series Latina." <http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=CCSL>., accessed July 30, 2017.
2. Mantello, F. A. C. and A. G. Rigg. 1996. *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America.
3. Thompson, John L. 2002. "Patrologia Latina Database." *Review of Biblical Literature* 4: 78-79.
4. For a list of specific volumes and authors included in the database: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrologia_Latina

Composite Score 4.25

Content Score	User Interface/Searchability Score	Pricing Score	Purchase/Contract Options Score
5.0	3.5	5.0	3.5
Content Notes	User Interface/Searchability Notes	Pricing Notes	Purchase/Contract Options Notes
The scholarly content included in the database is vital for researchers in many fields. Taken together with the Corpus Christianorum, published by Brepols, which critically edits to modern standards many of the works and authors in Patrologia, the Patrologia Latina database is crucial to researchers of primary source church documents as well as to many other scholarly disciplines.	The search interface offers flexibility using five search options (keyword; Greek keyword, title, author, and volume) as well as additional limiting options. The search interface is clear and easy to navigate. It would be improved by the addition of mouse-over definitions of the icons and search terms. The Help system could be improved by context-specific assistance.	For such an important scholarly resource, the pricing is very reasonable. My college has approximately 4,500 FTE. The library pays approximately \$2,000/year for Patrologia, including our consortium discount.	Overall, the licensing agreement is straightforward with standard permissions and restrictions covering, among other items: electronic reserves, interlibrary loan, scholarly sharing, and privacy. There is no governing law clause (which in other licensing agreements we frequently have to change to Rhode Island or have removed altogether) or indemnification clause (which our college counsel usually requires that we negotiate out of an agreement.)

About the Author:

Janice G. Schuster is commons librarian, research, education and collections/associate professor at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island. She is responsible for the library's electronic resources and serials, co-chairs the library's Knowledge Collections group and serves on the library's assessment group. She serves the college in many ways including: Faculty Senate: elected at-large senator, appointed secretary for Senate website and listserv, appointed member of the Faculty Status committee and of the ad hoc committee to reevaluate the college's anti-harassment policy; Common Reading Program: member of the steering committee, chair of the library resources subcommittee and member of the essay contest subcommittee. She has served for many years as the co-chair of the Electronic Resources Affinity Group of the Higher Education Library and Information Network (HELIN) consortium. She has published on electronic resources, serials, adoption and livable communities. She holds B.A. and M.L.S. degrees from Indiana University (Bloomington). She can be reached at Janice.Schuster@providence.edu or http://works.bepress.com/janice_schuster

© American Library Association. Contact permissions@ala-choice.org for permission to reproduce or redistribute.